

Book Reviews

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DRUGS IN LITIGATION: Damage Awards Involving Prescription and Nonprescription Drugs—Second Edition—Compiled by the Editorial Staff of the publishers of *LAWYERS' MEDICAL CYCLOPEDIA*: Compilation Editors—Richard M. Patterson, JD, Robert E. Robinson, JD; Contributors and Consultants: H. Newcomb Morse, JD, LL.M.; Charles J. Frankel, MD, LL.B., and Monte G. Crumley, PharmD, JD. The Allen Smith Company, 1435 North Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202, 1982. 504 pages, \$35.00 (soft-bound).

The introduction to this book describes the purpose of the text "to fill the need of the legal and medical professions for a compilation of personal injury cases involving untoward results of prescription and non-prescription drugs." Although the book is a compilation of some of these cases, its usefulness for the most part is probably limited to those attorneys involved in this type of litigation. A physician curious about such litigation might enjoy reading the case summaries, but the number of cases collected (approximately 328) is small in relation to the total drug litigation that has taken place, and the information provided in the case summaries is often very limited.

Some explanation of the way in which the cases appear to have been collected may be of assistance in understanding the book's content. The cases cited fall into two general categories. The first is lawsuits that have resulted in published appellate opinions. After a case has been tried, one or more parties may appeal. This results in a decision by the appellate court. If the court renders a written opinion, it may order that it be published. Published opinions usually include a summary of the case and how it was decided by the lower court. The book's second apparent source of case summaries is periodicals of the American Medical Association (the *Citation*) and the Association of Trial Lawyers of America. Cases in this second category were normally settled or "tried to judgment" and then described in the aforementioned periodicals in the absence of a published appellate opinion. Because so relatively few cases result in either published appellate opinions or reports in the periodicals mentioned above, the cases collected cannot be assumed to be representative of the mass of drug litigation past or present.

Furthermore, because the authors are using secondary sources there is also reason to be concerned about the accuracy of the case summaries. I have represented physicians in many cases involving alleged adverse reactions to medications and have "tried to verdict" approximately half a dozen and settled numerous others. Only one of these cases is cited in *Drugs in Litigation*. Several important inaccuracies occur in the book's summary of the case. Nevertheless, the drug at issue in the case, many of the circumstances and the result are reported correctly.

Although the limited number of cases collected does not appear representative of all drug litigation, approximately 143 different medications are nevertheless represented in the collected lawsuits. Medications receiving the most space included oral contraceptives, poliovirus vaccine, chloramphenicol, penicillin, chloroquine, diethylstilbestrol, promazine hydrochloride and oxytocin. Other drugs that are often the subject of litigation at present received limited space. Phenylbutazone, for instance, a potentially dangerous medication with manufacturer's warnings that can easily create problems for defendant physicians, was represented briefly by only three cases.

In spite of the difficulties in producing a book with such an ambitious purpose, the cases collected have been presented and indexed with thought and intelligence. For an attorney involved in the defense of physicians, this collection is useful in two ways.

First, it cites case law in appellate opinions from throughout the country which may be helpful. Second, it cites cases already tried that can be the source of information discovered regarding a medication. This is important because of the general absence of reliable information on the incidence of adverse reactions to drugs. The toxic effects of many drugs likely to result in malpractice actions are of low incidence and are identified only after a drug has been marketed and used. Such reactions are reported irregularly and inconsistently. Reporting to the Food and Drug Administration by a physician is entirely voluntary and there is no other organized effort that can possibly provide an estimate of the incidence of drug reactions during use in conditions of active practice. In the absence of such pharmacologic information, knowledge gained about adverse reactions from other lawsuits can sometimes be of assistance.

The difficulties in defending physicians in drug litigation can be considerable. One common problem is the *PDR* which plaintiff's counsel often attempts to convince the jury represents the standard of care in the community. (The introduction to *Drugs in Litigation* describes the *PDR* as "the physician's Bible for drug information"!.) This problem can be compounded because some of the material in the *PDR* regarding adverse reactions and warnings is ambiguous and provides a fertile field for plaintiff's counsel to argue a meaning favorable to the plaintiff. A second problem can be the codefendant drug company that may take a position damaging to the physician in attempting to divest itself of responsibility. A third problem, referred to above, is the lack of reliable information on the incidence of toxic effects of drugs as used by physicians. In these circumstances, any assistance to the physician's counsel is gladly sought and *Drugs in Litigation* can on occasion provide such assistance.

In summary, this book is a useful resource but cannot be relied on as the final authority for a vast body of litigation involving drugs.

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GYNECOLOGIC ONCOLOGY—Fundamental Principles and Clinical Practice—Volumes 1 and 2—Edited by Malcolm Coppleson, MB, BS, MD(Syd), FRCOG, FRACOG, Head, Gynecologic Oncology Unit, King George V Memorial Hospital, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney, Australia. Churchill Livingstone, Inc., 1560 Broadway, New York, NY 10036, 1981. 1,059 pages in 2 volumes, \$187.50.

This 1,059 page two-volume set represents the monumental efforts of more than 100 cancer specialists from throughout the world. The book is divided into 15 parts. Five parts are designed to cover specific principles in general oncologic management. The remaining ten discuss the various organs within the female generative tract individually. Each part is composed of selected concise chapters contributed by individual authors on isolated aspects of organ systems.

The editor states that the book is "designed as a comprehensive, authoritative, particularly detailed, and encyclopedic treatment." He has succeeded in some of these areas but not in others. The book is comprehensive in that it devotes time to all organs in the reproductive tract; however, it spends only 56 pages on carcinoma of the endometrium, the most common

BOOK REVIEWS

gynecologic malignant condition in developed countries. The book suffers to a severe degree from organizational defects resulting in an unevenness from section to section. It is a loose association of articles contributed on selected topics. The reader is by no means confident that specific basic points will be covered and is therefore not apt to select this book as a ready reference for gynecologic oncology. Selected contributions by European authors present opinions and clinical practices that vary widely from standard oncologic practice in this country. These sections represent fascinating reports of alternative management approaches of great interest to physicians caring for patients with gynecologic malignancies. The treatment of bulky stage 11B cervical cancer by primary intracavitary radium and surgical procedures represents a significant difference in treatment philosophy between the continents. Americans reading this book should have a knowledge of standard practice in this country to appreciate these differences and to realize that these approaches may not be conventional here.

Many of the chapters represent reports of the author's personal experience and not compilations of the knowledge at large. In view of the high quality of authorship in this book, this may not necessarily represent a shortcoming. Little emphasis is given to the great advances in chemotherapy made in gynecologic oncology over the past decade.

Little guidance is given for patient treatment within the text and this will hamper its application. This two volume set is of interest to subspecialists in gynecologic oncology. It would not be an appropriate selection as the sole oncology text for practitioners or residents in gynecology.

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PRINCIPLES OF CLINICAL ELECTROCARDIOLOGY—11th Edition—Mervin J. Goldman, MD, Clinical Professor of Medicine, University of California, San Francisco, School of Medicine. Lange Medical Publications, Drawer L, Los Altos, CA 94022, 1982. 438 pages, \$15.00.

The 11th edition of *Principles of Clinical Electrocardiography* by Dr Mervyn Goldman is like previous editions, in paperback, with 437 pages (full 8 by 11½ size). The book consists of 21 chapters each of which deals with a particular electrocardiographic entity. There is an excellent chapter on the introduction to electrocardiographic principles followed by a concise and to-the-point presentation of electrophysiology of the heart. Next follows definitions of the various waves and intervals on the electrocardiogram and their norms. The fourth chapter introduces the reader to the vector approach to cardiac activation and the computation of the mean QRS vector or the mean QRS axis.

Using the vectoral approach chapter 5 deals with the normal electrocardiographic patterns of the P-waves and QRS complexes as well as the ST and T waves. Subsequent chapters deal with patterns of cardiac hypertrophy, intraventricular conduction defects, myocardial ischemia, myocardial infarction, atrial arrhythmias, atrioventricular conduction defects, ventricular arrhythmias, preexcitation syndromes, aberrancy. There is also a chapter on cardiac pacing and defibrillation followed by an introduction to spatial vectocardiography. The final chapter is on an approach to the interpretation of electrocardiograms.

Several chapters have been upgraded and new information pertaining to the differential diagnosis of transmural versus nontransmural myocardial infarction included. A section on left anterior conduction delay has been added. A section on electrical pacing has been expanded and 44 new electrocardiograms have been added.

The 1st edition of Dr Goldman's book was published in 1956 and the fact that it is in its 11th edition and has been extensively translated in many languages is a testimony to its popularity.

The book makes easy reading because of the logical sequence of presentation of topics and large and simple diagrams, and

the electrocardiograms that appear on just about every other page of the book. Its strongest points are the clarity with which Dr Goldman has presented the subject. A compact list of references, including both articles and reference books, is presented in the third appendix.

I have found this book extremely helpful over 12 years of teaching housestaff and students and, to expose my bias, it is the book that I read during my years of postgraduate training. This book is not meant to be an exhaustive text on the subject and is not aimed at cardiologists. Likewise, it does not present a cookbook approach to the subject for those who may be looking for such. One apparent negative feature of the book is the number of pages. However, this results from the ample size of the sketches and electrocardiograms and the prominent print. Although the text is meant to convey concepts and principles, which it does so well, it would be advantageous to the reader if a chapter on management of individual arrhythmias were included.

This book is suitable for a spectrum of students of the subject ranging from nurses, medical students, postgraduate trainees and for the medical practitioner, for whom I enthusiastically recommend Dr Goldman's latest edition on the subject.

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PAEDIATRIC CARDIOLOGY—Volume 3—Edited by Anton E. Becker, Tom G. Losekoot, Carlo Marcelletti, and Robert H. Anderson. Churchill Livingstone Inc., 1560 Broadway, New York, NY 10036, 1981. 485 pages, \$65.00.

This book is a compilation of papers from an international symposium held in Amsterdam, September 1979. It is not a textbook of pediatric cardiology but it is an outstanding review of selected topics presented by cardiologists, surgeons and pathologists who are recognized authorities in their fields. Each section covers a topic and contains one to ten "chapters." Each chapter covers various aspects of the topic. Most sections are followed by question-and-answer sections that are pertinent, at times provocative and definitely informative. Most sections are "state of the art" presentations of classification of congenital heart malformations, clinical electrophysiology, transposition of the great arteries, coronary arteries in congenital heart disease, myocardial problems, axial angiography, straddling atrioventricular valves and definitive palliative surgical treatment. The section on echocardiography is selective. It contains an excellent review of contrast echocardiography and left ventricular function.

Most sections are outstanding. The section on sequential chamber analysis is a clear concise discussion with excellent illustrations of the latest attempt at taxonomy or classification of congenital heart disease. This is a controversial subject. The authors present a strong case for the use of sequential chamber and great vessel analysis as an all-encompassing and practical method of classification. The section on coronary arteries in congenital heart disease is a superbly presented and illustrated discussion of a topic that has become of great interest to pediatric cardiologists and surgeons. The recent interest has been fostered by rapid advances made in cardiac surgical procedures such as the arterial switch for transposition of the great arteries and operations requiring right ventriculotomy.

This book is highly recommended for pediatric cardiologists as a source of the latest information on selected topics. The book should also be very useful to cardiac surgeons, cardiovascular radiologists, adult cardiologists with special interest in pediatric cardiology and other health professionals who care for children with congenital heart disease.

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